

A new breed of rescue dog

The dog traffic is heavy on the lawn of the Lost Dogs Home. The warm grass outside of the adoption pens is littered with wagging tails. There are almost as many volunteers at the Lost Dogs Home as there are dogs. The furry residents receive daily walks and long cuddles in the sun. Every dog is healthy, of sound temperament and ready to go home.

Today, long time resident, Humphrey, has been placed on hold. It is not a guaranteed home, but it is official interest in the chocolate Labrador whose only 'vice' is his excitable nature.

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Fundraising Manager, Sharon Elliott, stands smiling down at the dog. She cannot help but share the news with volunteers as they pass her.

'I'm still surprised at the amount of people that don't understand that they are just ordinary dogs,' says Elliott, shaking her head.

If Humphrey was in a pound, he would most likely be dead. Thanks to changes in adoption procedures, together with public education, healthy dogs like Humphrey now have bright futures.

'Up to 2011 if we put an animal up for adoption and it wasn't adopted within 28 days, that animal would then have to be euthanized, which is ridiculous,' says Elliott.

Every life is valued at the shelter, says Elliott. All suitable dogs have the same stringent adoption process regardless of age or breed. The process ensures that each dog is placed in a home that is loving, suitable and permanent.

'Owners have to go through quite a rigorous interview with us,' says Elliott.

The shelter also introduced a Pet License test in March 2010. The online tool is designed to

from Starting Over Dog Rescue.' If they are surrendered to a pound, then they only have a certain amount of time.'

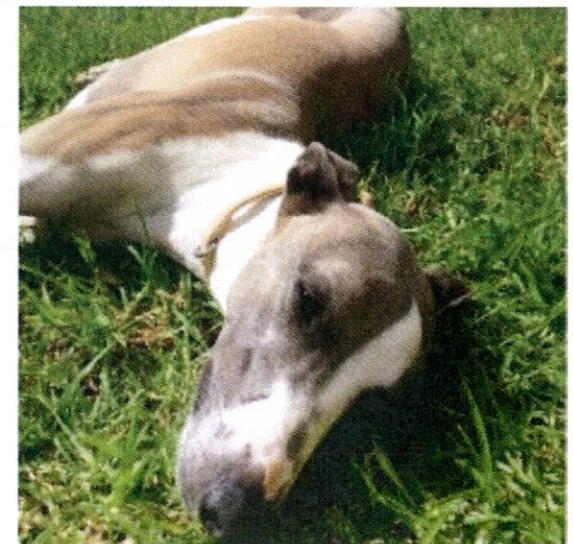
Rescue organisations work differently from shelters in that all dogs are placed into temporary Foster homes until they are adopted. Dogs are de-sexed, vaccinated, wormed, micro-chipped and then assessed in a family environment.

'A lot of the carers are Foster failures because they end up adopting them,' says Young, laughing.

educate people on responsible pet ownership. Owners that complete the test are offered a discount off their adoption fee.

Dog adoption fees in Australia can range from \$200 to \$450, depending on which organisation you adopt through. There are 567 rescue organisations on petrescue.com.au alone. The site is a digital hub that is striving to make adoption the first choice for all. Its growth is an indication that pets are no longer being viewed as disposable.

'We usually get the dogs from [pound] put to sleep lists,' says Monique Young, a foster carer



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The dogs that are deemed suitable for adoption have their profiles placed online so that potential adoptees can browse. These once discarded animals are transformed into much desired 'rescue dogs'. With no time restrictions, Starting Over Dog rescue has a 100 per cent adoption rate so far.

Potential owners can expect a thorough suitability assessment when adopting through a rescue group. The procedure can include a lengthy application form, references, a phone interview, an initial meet and greet and a back yard inspection. The process is not without perks. Many organisations offer a cooling off period, access to a dog behaviouralist, ongoing support and a re-home policy for the lifetime of the dog.

The once discarded dogs are shedding the negative stigmas previously attached to them. They are becoming something of value. They are becoming sought after companions and beloved family members. They are rescue dogs, and only the worthy need apply.



Tanya Bird is a Communications student and mother of two who aspires to be a freelance writer between school bells.